WRITING AND REPORTING NEWS

A Coaching Method

CAROLE RICH

Eighth Edition

Writing and Reporting News

A COACHING METHOD

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EIGHTH EDITION

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Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method, Eighth Edition
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Preface

It's an exciting time to be studying journalism. "In my view the future of journalism can and will be better than its past," according to Richard Gingras, senior director of news and social products at Google. "I believe we are at the beginnings of a renaissance in the exploration and re-invention of how news is gathered, expressed, and engaged with. The media landscape is in the process of being completely transformed, tossed upside down; reinvented and restructured in ways we know, and in ways we do not *yet* know."

Although the development and delivery of news will continue to change, some journalism skills remain essential. This book teaches the basic skills of journalism as well as the skills for producing social and mobile media for digital delivery.

As in previous editions, the coaching concepts of this book are designed to help students acquire the writing and reporting skills they will need no matter which media field they choose to enter. The book also includes breakout boxes of social media, ethics and multimedia in every chapter. The chapters are written in a storytelling style to make learning a pleasant reading experience.

NEW MATERIAL IN THIS EDITION

This eighth edition of *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method* has been revised to include more social media, multimedia and mobile media skills in every chapter. All chapters have been updated, more photos have been added and the following new sections have been added:

Chapter 1: Changing Concepts of News offers a new section on objectivity vs. neutrality.

Chapter 2: The Basic News Story contains a new section on objectivity and a new example of the basic news story.

Chapter 3: Social Media (was Chapter 4 in 7th edition) now includes new sections on verifying social media, curation, and a social media glossary.

Chapter 4: Sources and Online Research (was Chapter 5 in 7th edition) includes a new section on data sources.

Chapter 5: Interviewing Techniques (was Chapter 6 in 7th edition.) includes new information about the controversy in colleges over email interviews.

Chapter 6: Mobile and Multimedia Skills (was Chapter 3 in 7th edition.) is a major rewrite with expanded information on mobile media, new sections about multiplatform consumers, and multimedia innovation.

Chapter 9: Story Forms features a new lead focusing on the *Denver Post* Pulitzer Prize about the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater shooting and includes a new example for the question/answer story form.

Chapter 11: Broadcast News Writing features a new section on VOs and VOSOTs (voice-overs).

Chapter 12: Online Journalism offers another major rewrite with new examples from prize-winning college websites and a new section on digital first media.

Chapter 15: Media Ethics includes a new section on conflicts of interest.

Chapter 16: Multicultural Sensitivity features an expanded section on the Language of Multiculturalism with a new section on gender-neutral language.

Chapter 17: Profiles and Obituaries includes a new section on micro profiles (also called Twitter profiles).

Chapter 18: Speeches, News Conferences and Meetings includes a new lead and new examples.

Chapter 21: Disasters, Weather and Tragedies features new sections on the Boston Marathon bombing, Deadline Dangers, the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy and the role of social media in these tragedies.

Chapter 22: Media Jobs and Internships includes updated information using Twitter and social media and a new section on online portfolios.

For the first time a **Glossary** offers an alphabetical list of key journalism terms in the book. Also the inside back cover offers a quick **Glossary-at-a-Glance,** which features selected key journalism terms and social media terms.

HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

Although this textbook is arranged sequentially to take students through the steps from conceiving ideas to constructing stories, each chapter is self-contained so the chapters may be used in any order. While some material has moved to other chapters, the basic structure of the book has been retained:

Part 1: Understanding News: Part One contains chapters that explain changes in the media, the basics of a news story and the impact of social media on how we read and write news. This part will give students a greater understanding of the course they are about to take.

Part 2: Collecting Information: The three chapters in Part Two outline ways to collect the necessary information to write a story. Information includes types of sources available, online research, interviewing techniques and mobile and multimedia skills.

Part 3: Constructing Stories: Part Three covers tools to create stories in a variety of media. From writing leads to organizing stories, this section features techniques to help students whether they plan to pursue careers in print, broadcast, online media or in public relations.

Part 4: Understanding Media Issues: The chapters in Part Four discuss legal and ethical issues critical to understanding media today. The chapter on multicultural sensitivity covers topics that are more relevant and important now than ever before.

Part 5: Applying the Techniques: The chapters in Part Five apply techniques taught in the rest of the book to specific types of stories, from speeches to crimes and

disasters. This section also features a chapter that teaches students how to apply for jobs by crafting cover letters and resumes in print and online formats.

ALSO AVAILABLE DIGITALLY

MindTap for Journalism, offering the ultimate personal learning experience, is now available with *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method*, Eighth Edition. Fully integrated into one seamless experience, MindTap combines readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments into a singular learning path—guiding students through the course, maximizing study time and helping them master course concepts. Instructors can personalize the learning path by customizing Cengage Learning resources and adding their own content via apps that integrate into the MindTap framework with any learning management system. Also included within MindTap for this edition:

Learning Objectives help students understand what they will learn in each chapter.

Getting Started Activities engage students at the start of each part, motivating them to learn and collaborate via forums, voting and polling questions, and more.

Workbook Activities reworked from the workbook that has always been offered, are integrated into chapter readings to help students practice as they learn.

Chapter Quizzes help to gauge student understanding of the concepts in the chapter.

NewsScene Assignments based on realistic news events. Assignments offer extensive source material, including videotaped interviews, telephone messages, official documents and database information, which helps students sharpen their writing skills for print, broadcast and online media.

To learn more, ask your Cengage Learning sales representative to demo MindTap for you—or visit www.cengage.com/mindtap.

SUPPLEMENTS

The **Instructor's Companion Website** is an all-in-one resource for class preparation and presentation for instructors. Accessible through Cengage.com/login with your faculty account, you will find the latest revision of the Instructor's Manual (description below), as well as a list of helpful weblinks that can be used to broaden students' learning experiences.

The **Instructor's Resource Manual** contains chapter-specific goals, teaching suggestions and answers to the textbook and workbook exercises. It has been revamped to include not only the News Scene IM, but also to also help instructors teach through the MindTap. The Resource Manual also includes examples of original stories. Because the Instructor's Resource Manual is an electronic document, the file is available for download at the Instructor's Companion Website, at *login.cengage.com*.

The **Student Workbook**, which will be available as a print-on-demand request for this edition, features several exercises in each chapter to reinforce the concepts taught in *Writing and Reporting News*, Eighth Edition. These include quizzes, exercises designed to give students more opportunities to improve their reporting and writing skills, and exercises designed to encourage critical thinking by asking students to critique news stories and analyze websites. This edition of the workbook also includes practice in using social media skills. Please contact your local sales representative to request the workbook for your students.

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About the Author

Carole Rich has spent 25 years teaching journalism at four universities and coaching professional writers throughout the U.S. She has taught at the University of Alaska Anchorage and has served as chair of the journalism department at Hofstra University in Long Island, N.Y. She began her teaching career at the University of Arizona in 1985 and then taught journalism at the University of Kansas from 1987 to 1998 when she was hired as the distinguished Atwood professor in Alaska. Prior to becoming a professor, she worked for 16 years in the newspaper industry. She was a reporter for the former *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin,* city editor of the *Sun-Sentinel* in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and deputy metropolitan editor of the *Hartford* (Connecticut) *Courant.*

Rich has been a visiting writing coach at newspapers throughout the U.S. and has conducted many writing seminars at journalism organizations, including a seminar for professional journalists in Spain. She is also the author of *Creating Online Media: A Guide to Research, Writing and Design on the Internet,* published by McGraw-Hill.

COACHING TIPS

Consider ways to present your story for **print, broadcast, mobile and online media.**

Ask yourself **how your story affects your readers.**

Consider whether your story needs a **photograph, graphic, audio or video.**

Plan to update your story for **online delivery.**

Use social media sites to connect with readers and viewers.

CHAPTER 1
Changing Concepts of News

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We are very bullish on the future of high-quality journalism. . . . The distribution models are changing and the players producing certain forms of journalism are going to change. But it happens to be the most exciting time in journalism.

—**MARTIN T. MOE**, *Senior Vice President, AOL Media*

IT'S SHORTLY AFTER 1 A.M., AND THE POLICE OFFICER'S PATROL IS uneventful, except for the man carrying a 5-inch-long rat on his shoulder. No crime; it was just a man who bought a rat at a pet store. At 5:42 a.m. a young mother wakes to the cries of her hungry 10-month-old daughter. At noon a homeless woman with a canister of pepper spray in her bra waits for lunch at the local soup kitchen, and as midnight approaches, three fraternity members celebrate the last day of classes by climbing on the merry-go-round at a shopping mall.

These are just a few of the stories and photographs that chronicle one day in the life of residents in Lawrence, Kansas. The project could be done in any community. When the *Lawrence* (Kansas) *Journal-World* tackled the subject, it created a "multimedia time capsule" by producing the story in the newspaper, on television and on its website with text, photos, audio and video.

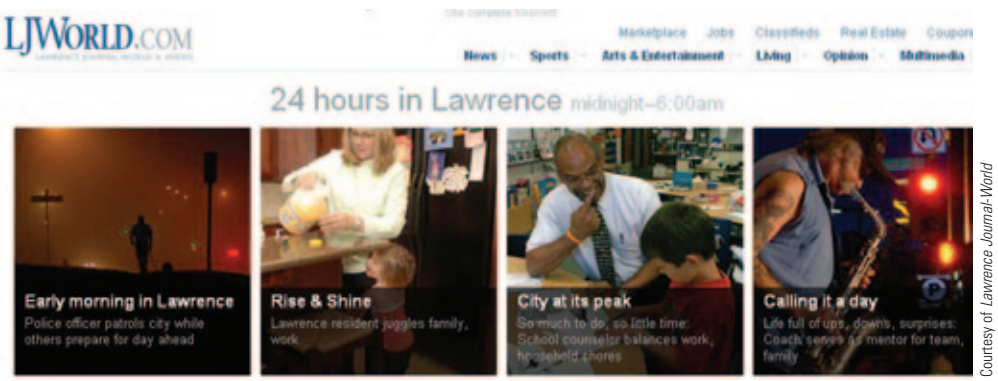
Courtesy of *Lawrence Journal-World*

That's not unusual these days. Almost every news organization has done a 24-hour story, but what made this different was the participation from the community. In addition to reporting by reporters and photographers of the newspaper and its partner TV station, residents participated by sending in stories about their day in various forms: podcasts, blogs, video, photos and text messages via email.

This project was one of several innovative methods the *Lawrence Journal-World* has produced to interact with its readers and viewers in multimedia forms. And it is an example of how the nature of news is changing.

Readers are participating much more in producing and reacting to news through social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and others. Mobile media and tablet computers are also affecting how news is delivered.

"Americans are now fully into the digital era," according to a study by the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. More than three-quarters of U.S. adults own a laptop or desktop computer, and 56 percent own



Courtesy of *Lawrence Journal-World*

smartphones, according to the study. "News is a significant part of how people use these devices. . . . A mounting body of evidence finds that the spread of mobile technology is adding to news consumption."

Readers and viewers don't just receive news; they help collect and create it. They get the news when, how and where they want it on computers, mobile phones, tablet devices or social media networks. They contribute to traditional media outlets with news tips, story ideas and eyewitness reports in text, video and photos via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other social media sites.

Definitions of news are also evolving, and economic factors such as mergers of media companies have changed the landscape of the news industry.

Declining newspaper circulation, increased competition from cable television news stations and access to millions of sites on the Internet are forcing news organizations to expand ways to interest readers and viewers. The days of writing for a single medium have ended at most news, public relations and advertising organizations.

MEDIA CONVERGENCE

Many of the skills you need to become a journalist are still grounded in basic reporting and writing principles, but in today's market you need to know how to present information for print, broadcast and online media. This mixture of media is called "convergence," "multimedia," "integrated media" and other terms.

In some types of convergence, a print news organization partners with a broadcast station to collaborate on a story. In other newsrooms the print and broadcast facilities are in the same building where journalists coordinate news coverage. Convergence can also be considered the merger of print, audio, video and interactive elements in an online form.

The *Lawrence Journal-World* was one of the first news organizations in the U.S. to converge its print, broadcast and online operations, which are housed in a 1906 brick building that belies the modern newsroom inside. In 2001, owner and publisher Dolph C. Simons converted a vacant post office on the National Register of Historic Places into a newsroom featuring a circular multimedia desk where editors coordinate information from print, broadcast and online media reporters. "We want to stay abreast of new developments and be able to deliver news and advertising, as well as other information, however a reader or advertiser might desire," Simons said.

These days many newsrooms at universities and news organizations all over the world have been reorganized to foster convergence of multimedia on a variety of platforms.

CHANGING DELIVERY OF NEWS

The increasing popularity of smartphones and tablet computers like the iPad is creating new venues for news companies to deliver their products. Mobile news delivery is the fastest growing trend for the media industry.

USA Today has completely restructured its newsroom to take advantage of distributing news on mobile and tablet platforms. The company disbanded its universal desk and reorganized the newsroom around 15 content areas such as travel, personal finance, technology and subjects that are geared to the audience and technology of mobile and tablet media.

These changes in technology have spawned an alphabet soup of terms related to forms of delivering news. Here are some common terms:

- **Blogs:** The term blog is short for "Web log" because blogs are posted on the Web. A blog can be a personal journal or brief commentary about any topic and can include audio or video.
- **Podcast:** This is digital media information in audio or video form distributed over the Internet for use on a portable media player such as an iPod, an instrument developed by Apple Inc., or an MP3 player. Pod is an abbreviation for "portable on demand." You don't need an iPod to hear or view a podcast; you can receive it on your computer with the use of software.

SOCIAL MEDIA

SOCIAL NETWORKING has transformed the media, according to Clay Shirky, a New York University professor who is considered an expert in this field. "We are living in the middle of the largest increase in expressive capability in the history of the human race," he wrote in his book *Here Comes Everybody*. "More people can communicate more things to more people than has ever been possible in the past, and the size and speed of this increase, from under one million participants to over one billion in a generation, makes the change unprecedented, even considered against the background of previous revolutions in communications tools."

Here are a few of the ways social media sites are changing journalism:

- **New job positions:** News organizations are hiring social media editors. They interact with their communities on sites such as Twitter and Facebook, train journalists in their newsrooms to use social media, and maintain and contribute blogs or tweets to company sites.
- **Reporting:** Journalists are using social media to gain tips and sources and to communicate with readers and viewers, especially during a breaking news event. Many government and community organizations and corporate communications agencies also post information on social media sites that reporters can follow to gain information.
- **Participation by readers and viewers:** News organizations are soliciting information from subscribers to their websites and social media sites for breaking news, eyewitness reports and feedback about stories and issues. And social media users share information about the news with each other, creating new types of communities. "The public is clearly part of the news process now. Participation comes more through sharing than through contributing news themselves," according to a report by the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

- **RSS:** These letters stand for "Really Simple Syndication," which is probably simpler to use than to define. If you want to receive certain blogs or podcasts regularly, you can subscribe to a site using a Web feed reader called an "aggregator" that will compile them and deliver them to you. You insert a link to the site into the aggregator software. Search engines such as Google or Yahoo! offer to deliver automatic updates of news via RSS feeds. These feeds, delivered to your account, contain headlines, summaries and links to the articles.
- **Aggregator:** This is software that compiles or collects certain websites that you want delivered to you regularly and pushes them to you via email or automatically downloads them for you into a portable media player. The aggregator is also known as a feed reader because it "reads" the sites it will "feed" to you. It checks them for new material and downloads updates to your account for easy access on your computer or portable media device.
- **Social media:** News organizations are using social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr and others to connect with readers and viewers. Social media is electronic communication where users share information, ideas, messages, audio and video content on websites designed to create online communities.

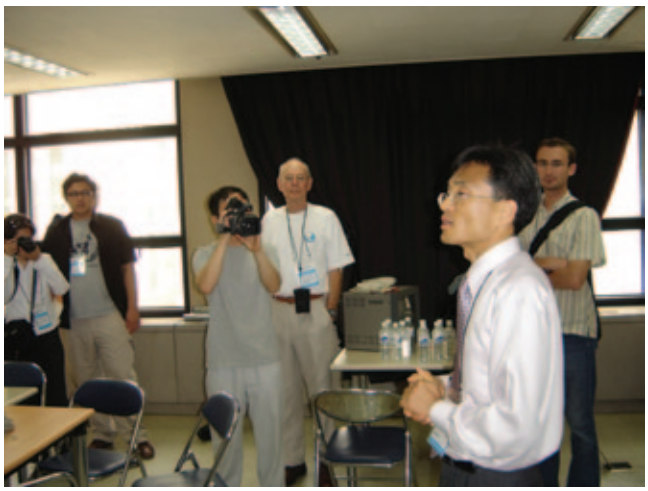
CITIZEN JOURNALISM

The concept of involving readers and viewers in reporting and disseminating news is called "citizen journalism," "participatory journalism" or "user-generated-content." The movement is an attempt by media organizations to increase their interaction with their audience. The contributors are often called "citizen journalists" because they are not staff members of the news organization, even though they may write blogs on a regular basis for the media website. Social media contributors sometimes perform the same functions.

Many of the citizen journalism sites are considered hyperlocal, providing local news and information for a neighborhood or small community within a larger area such as *The Oakland Local* (*oaklandlocal.com*). *The Twin Cities Daily Planet* (*www.tcdailyplanet.net*) is a successful hyperlocal site covering neighborhoods in the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, area. The site has 100 media partners and bloggers.

A pioneer in the user-generated-content movement is a South Korean website called OhmyNews International. Oh Yeon-ho, creator of the site, said his motto is "Every citizen is a reporter all over the world." Since its inception in 2000 with 727 citizen reporters, the organization has grown to more than 62,000 contributors, with 70 full-time editors and reporters. The focus of the organization has changed to report more about citizen journalism than world news.

Courtesy of OhmyNews International



Erik Moller/Creative Commons

OhmyNews founder Oh Yeon Ho in the newsroom in Seoul, Korea.

This is how the company describes itself and its focus on citizen journalism: "We are a small team based at *OhmyNews* in Seoul, South Korea. We are international journalists. We know technology, and we are curious about the global progress of citizen journalism. And we adore coffee always. Grassroots journalism, citizen media, [and] crowdsourcing are all related terms that tackle the same question: How are regular people making and changing the news?"

ECONOMIC CHANGES IN MEDIA

The changing face of the media isn't just in the content and delivery of news; it is in the ownership of the largest media organizations. Economic forces created significant changes in major media companies at the start of the 21st century. Newspaper circulation was declining, and the large media companies listed on the stock exchange were under pressure because of sagging stock profits for their shareholders. Print and broadcast news organizations cut staffs and resources. Two of the largest media organizations, Knight Ridder Inc. and the Tribune Company, sold their newspapers and TV stations.

Journalists who got into the business years ago with the idealistic notion that the primary concern of media companies was content became disillusioned by the emphasis on economics, and many quit or retired. The times were changing and the news business was just that — a business that was supposed to make a profit. But journalists didn't disappear; many of them formed new online ventures and found news-related jobs in other publications, businesses, public relations organizations and government agencies. Good journalism skills have broad application.

Partnerships

News organizations that were once fiercely competitive formed partnerships to share news stories in print and video as a way to cut costs. In South Florida, *The Miami Herald*, the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* and the *Palm Beach Post* began sharing stories, and similar arrangements were created among newspapers in Maine, Ohio and Texas. The nature of competition has changed.

Partnerships with university journalism departments are another way news organizations are expanding their coverage without expanding their staffs. *The New York Times* has a partnership with City University of New York in which journalism students write blogs to cover communities in Brooklyn and New Jersey; and with New York University journalism students to cover other communities within the metro area.

AOL has created a partnership with several universities called "PatchU," which offers internships and coursework as well as freelance opportunities at Patch publications, which are online sites that provide news and information in hundreds of communities. Students can write stories and cover local events in multimedia form and integrate social media for the Patch sites.

Pay Walls

Would you be willing to pay for online news that you currently can get free? That's a dilemma facing news organizations that are seeking ways to pay rising costs for their online publications. With advertising revenues declining and competition rising from other websites, news organizations have discussed charging for access to some or all of their online content. Several news sites have created pay walls, which wall off, or block access to, certain content. The cost of applications for digital delivery to smartphones and tablets will also affect the future of charges for online information.

CHANGES IN ONLINE NEWS

The Web has changed the nature of news in other ways:

Continual Deadlines When a news story breaks, reporters at many newspaper and broadcast organizations are expected to file the story immediately for the Web and update major stories online throughout the day. Twitter has changed the nature of breaking news as well. Reporters may tweet updates continually during a major incident or any breaking news story.

Interactive Content One of the main distinctions of online news is the ability to interact with readers. Web news stories often feature interactive content such as polls, chats and questions at the end of stories to prompt readers to express their views, as well as requests to comment on a news organization's social media site. More than ever, writers need to consider how their audience will be affected by the story, regardless of the medium.

Related Links Online news is accompanied by links to related information, so a news story may no longer be a single entity. Traditional print and broadcast news stories also refer readers and viewers to related online information. Social media sites such as Twitter also feature links to blogs, photos, videos and other media content.

Nonlinear Structure Print and broadcast news stories are written in linear order — to be read or heard from beginning to end as if in a straight line. Because the Web features links and multimedia features, it creates a nonlinear environment, meaning readers may access content in any order they choose. Although many online news stories are still linear, original Web content is organized in more related pieces. Instead of one story containing all the information, nonlinear news might be split into separate parts for background, profiles, timelines, databases and multimedia.

Databases Many news sites offer databases that you can search for information about health, school test scores, or crime statistics in your community. For example, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (*www.philly.com*) offers an annual report card allowing you to search a database for public and private schools in Pennsylvania and New Jersey to find out about school test scores and related facts for schools in these areas. Many other news sites also offer searchable databases for crime statistics, school test scores and other community information.

Personalized Journalism In addition to blogs as a form of personalized journalism, online news sites are reaching out to users by asking them to contribute their personal stories on the organization's website or its Facebook or Twitter pages.

CHANGING VALUES

Several news organizations, such as the Radio Television Digital News Association, are developing special ethical codes for social media. With slight adjustments, these codes mirror the ones that apply to mainstream media. However, a study of executives from RTDNA and the American Society of Newspaper Editors revealed that these news leaders have some serious concerns about the effect the Internet and social networks are having on news values.

The study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism revealed that more than 62 percent of executives from print and 67 percent from broadcast media think accuracy is declining due in part to the speed of producing news and to social media. "I worry that journalistic standards are dropping in that blogging and celebrity gossip and tweets are being confused with reporting and editing that passes a rigorous standard," one broadcast executive wrote. A newspaper editor concurred and added, "There is too much emphasis, I believe, on getting information fast even at the expense of accuracy, thoroughness and fairness."

OBJECTIVITY

In the past, news reporting was expected to be objective or neutral, meaning that the story was supposed to be presented as factual and any opinions should be attributed. Many journalists and ethics experts have argued that objectivity is impossible because writers bring their acquired biases to reporting and writing; nevertheless, writers were supposed to try to be neutral in their reporting.

However, in the last few decades, news stories have contained more analysis to help readers understand the context of stories.

A study by Columbia University professor Michael Scudson and graduate student Katherine Fink revealed that in 1955, stories about events outnumbered other types of front-page stories nine to one. "Now, about half of all stories are something else: a report that tries to explain why, not just what," they wrote in their study.

ETHICS

PLAGIARISM AND FABRICATION

THE CASE: (This situation is based on the case of Jayson Blair, a former reporter for *The New York Times*.) A reporter for your campus newspaper quickly becomes a star by charming editors and professors. His stories are filled with descriptive details and human-interest features that gain him a reputation as an outstanding writer. But the editor of the paper is concerned because several of his stories require corrections after they are printed, and the editor can't trace some of the sources. The editor and some staffers complain to journalism professors about this reporter's inaccuracies, but the professors dismiss the complaints as jealousy over this rising star.

The reporter lands a prestigious internship with a large daily newspaper and later is hired full time even before he graduates from journalism school. He shows much promise and gets assigned to major national stories, but during his four years at the paper his stories require 50 corrections, and one of his editors thinks he should be fired. However, the top manager at the newspaper excuses the reporter because he says that he has had several personal problems.

His trail of deception, plagiarism and fabrication is uncovered after the newspaper is notified that he plagiarized a story written by a reporter at another paper. The story was only one of at least 36 articles containing plagiarized or fabricated quotes and facts. The reporter resigns, and the newspaper publishes an extensive front-page Sunday story explaining the situation and apologizing to readers.

Dilemma

- What steps could have or should have been taken to prevent this situation from happening?
- Should a reporter be fired as soon as the first incident of plagiarism or fabrication is discovered?
- Should a reporter whose stories require numerous corrections be fired?
- What would you have done if you were the campus editor or his editor at that newspaper?
- What can be done to prevent plagiarism and fabrication in the media?

Ethical values: Accuracy, credibility.

Ethical guidelines: According to the code of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, "Seek truth and report it. Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible."

Social media in the form of blogs and contributions from citizen journalists also affect journalistic impartiality.

QUALITIES OF NEWS

Definitions and delivery methods of news are changing. But these are some traditional qualities of news stories that still apply to print, broadcast and online media:

Timeliness An event that happened the day of or day before publication or an event that is due to happen in the immediate future is considered timely. In broadcast and

online media, timeliness is considered "immediacy" and is even more crucial. When stories are posted online immediately after they happen or broadcast several times a day, you have to consider how to update them frequently. Some events that happened in the past may also be considered timely if they are printed on an anniversary of the event, such as one, five or 10 years after the incident. Timeliness answers the reader's question: Why are you telling me this now? The following story was timely because it was published the day after the accident:

> A bus loaded with elementary school children crashed head-on into a compact car in southwestern Jefferson County yesterday, injuring 24 students and the two drivers.
>
> — *The* (Louisville, Kentucky) *Courier-Journal*

If that story had been written for broadcast or online media, the angle would have been updated to report the current condition of the students and drivers.

Proximity An event may be of interest to local readers because it happened in or close to the community. This story has proximity to people in Scottsdale, Arizona, where the accident occurred and to readers in Kansas because the victims were from Kansas State University:

> Two Kansas State University football fans who went to Arizona for the Fiesta Bowl are in the hospital with serious injuries after being hit by a suspected drunk driver in downtown Scottsdale.

Unusual Nature Out-of-the-ordinary events, a bizarre or rare occurrence, or people engaged in unusual activities are considered newsworthy, as in this story:

T. Campbell/U.S. Geological Survey

Monitor lizards are an invasive species in Florida.

MAN TICKETED FOR WALKING HIS LIZARD

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Walking your dog along the beach here is illegal — and so is lounging with your lizard, Chris DeMango found out. Mortimer, DeMango's 20-pound purple-tongued monitor lizard, complete with matching pink doll sweater and leash, was out for exercise Monday. DeMango said a walk makes Mortimer more docile, but police said it makes him an illegal lizard — animals are banned on the beach. DeMango was ticketed, and his

lizard law violation could cost him 60 days in jail and a $500 fine, said police spokesman Ott Cefkin. DeMango was not amused. "I would think that would be the most absurd thing, if I were to go to jail for this," he grumbled.

— *Tampa Bay Times/St. Petersburg* (Florida) *Times*

Human Interest People like stories about people who have special problems or achievements, or who have overcome difficulties. Human interest could also be described as animal interest stories because many stories about pets — especially missing or found pets — fit in this category.

Humans aren't the only ones who like to poke around their iPads. Now orangutans do, too.

When zoo keepers at the Smithsonian National Zoo were seeking ways to add more stimulation to the orangutans, they contacted Orangutan Outreach, a nonprofit organization that had success using iPads with apes at 12 other zoos in a program called "Apps for Apes." So they introduced iPads to six of the zoo's orangutans.

Their conclusions: Different apps for different apes. For example, "36-year-old Bonnie likes to bang on the drums, 16-year-old Kyle prefers the piano and 25-year-old Iris is content to listen to the soothing sounds of the koi pond while watching animated fish splash," according to a news release from the zoo.

"Apps for Apes fits perfectly in this new era of zoo keeping," said Becky Malinsky, great ape keeper at the National Zoo. "It's about changing up the day-to-day lives of our animals. We already vary their food, toys and social interactions every day, but the iPad offers another way to engage their sight, touch and hearing."

Richard Zimmerman, founding director of Orangutan Outreach, said the Apps for Apes program is designed to help people understand the need to protect wild orangutans from extinction. "We do that when we show Zoo visitors how similar humans and apes are, be it through observation, talking with wildlife experts or seeing the apes use the same technology we use every day," he said.

Conflict Stories involving conflicts that people have with government or other people are often newsworthy, especially when the conflict reflects local problems or, in this case, a national issue.

The Boy Scouts of America voted Thursday to end its controversial policy banning gay kids and teens from joining one of the nation's most popular youth organizations. . . .

Cpl Lauren Kurkimilis/Courtesy U.S. Marines

Boy Scouts from Pack 77.

But the outcome of the historic ballot is not going to end the debate: Some opponents on the right said they would pull their sponsorships of packs and troops, and parents threatened to take their boys out of Scouting.

— NBCNews.com

Impact Reaction stories to news events or news angles that affect readers have impact, especially when major national stories or tragedies occur in any community. Newspapers often seek local angles by writing how people in their areas are affected by the news, as in this story following a school shooting in Connecticut.

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. — The sale and display of semiautomatic weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines will be banned at the upcoming gun show at the Saratoga City Center after City Council passed a resolution in the wake of a mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut.

A gunman massacred 20 elementary school children and six educators at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut by using a Bushmaster Ar-15-style rifle, a popular firearm.

The decision to ban the sale and display of these weapons is part of a compromise between the Sarasota Springs city officials, who wanted to cancel the event, and organizers of the gun show, who wanted it to go on as planned.

Some additional qualities of news to consider:

Helpfulness Consumer, health and other how-to stories help readers cope with their lives. Online news sites abound with helpful stories.

If your head spins at the torrent of medical studies that fills newspapers, magazines and TV, join the club. It seems that each day brings another round of studies contradicting last month's hot results.

One day vitamin E is found to prevent cancer. Next, it is suspected of causing it.

Margarine is good. No, it's bad.

One can almost hear a collective scream of frustration across the land.

Studies are the cornerstone of medical progress, showing doctors and patients the way to longer, healthier lives. But they can also lead us astray.

To try to help you through the hype and hustle, here's a basic outline of what studies are, how they differ, what they can tell us and where they can go wrong. Call it A User's Guide to Medical Studies. Or, How to Follow Health News Without Having a Stroke.

— PHILLIP E. CANUTO, *Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service*

Celebrities People who are well-known for their accomplishments — primarily entertainers, athletes or people who have gained fame for achievements, good or bad — attract a lot of attention. But celebrity news has become so popular that some journalists are concerned it is displacing more important news and pandering to the public's desire for entertainment.

Ted Koppel, former anchor of the TV show "Nightline," said in a "Frontline" interview: "To the extent that we're now judging journalism by the same standards that we apply to entertainment — in other words, give the public what it wants, not necessarily what it ought to hear, what it ought to see, what it needs, but what it wants — that may prove to be one of the greatest tragedies in the history of American journalism."

Entertainment Stories that amuse readers, make them feel good or help them enjoy their leisure time have entertainment value. In a broad sense, many of the news features in sports and lifestyle sections can be classified as entertainment. These stories often involve celebrities or have human-interest qualities. But they are also controversial. The line between news and entertainment is not clear, especially in coverage of celebrities as stated in the previous item. However, this story combines qualities of human interest and unusual nature to entertain or amuse readers:

> When Marjorie Clapprood opened her W-2 form from the state of Massachusetts, she was shocked.
>
> The form said she was dead.
>
> "Boy, when you're out, you're out," said Clapprood, a former state representative who lost her bid for re-election.
>
> But she was by no means alone.
>
> State W-2 tax forms mailed recently listed all 199 members of last year's Legislature as dead.
>
> Some residents of the financially troubled state suspected that all along.
>
> But members of last year's Legislature are taking exception to their recent demise, which was caused by a clerical error.
>
> Clapprood, for one, said she isn't about to let the IRS consider her dead.
>
> "They owe me money, I think," she said.
>
> Corrected forms are to be mailed to the resurrected shortly.
>
> — TOM TOROK, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Issues or Problems in the Community These stories usually include qualities such as conflict and proximity. This story is about an issue of interest to Californians, but it would also be of interest to people in other cities where homelessness is a problem.

> Homeless people in California may be getting legal protection for sleeping, congregating, panhandling and urinating on public property.

Christopher Beland/Creative Commons

A homeless person sleeping on a street in San Francisco will have new rights under a proposed bill.

A San Francisco assemblyman has proposed a "Homeless Bill of Rights" to legally protect homeless people who are engaging in activities on public property. If passed by the Legislature, homeless people would have the right to sleep in legally parked cars, receive funds from public welfare programs and receive legal counsel if they are cited for infractions.

The measure is expected to be controversial in many cities, including Sacramento, which has battled tent cities for homeless people, and San Francisco, where local laws bar homeless people from sitting or lying on sidewalks.

Trends Stories may indicate trends, which are patterns or shifts in issues that influence readers' lives, such as increases in crime, social issues and other forces in society.

Many Milwaukee area public libraries no longer have strict "SH!" policies.

Libraries are shedding their image as quiet, somber places for bookworms and students only. Instead, today's libraries offer a wide variety of materials and programs in an effort to appeal to more people.

— LAWRENCE SUSSMAN, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

Hard News and Features

News falls into two basic categories: hard news and soft news. Hard news includes stories of a timely nature about events or conflicts that have just happened or are about to happen, such as crimes, fires, meetings, protest rallies, speeches and testimony in court cases. The hard-news approach is basically an account of what happened, why it happened and how readers will be affected. These stories have immediacy.

Soft news is defined as news that entertains or informs, with an emphasis on human interest and novelty, and less immediacy than hard news. For example, a profile about a man who designs model airplanes or a story about the effectiveness of diets would be considered soft news.

MULTIMEDIA COACH

TRAIN YOURSELF to think for multimedia.

- Compare online news stories with those in your local newspaper. Are they the same, or do they offer links, polls, questions and other related features?

If your local TV news station has a website, compare that site with the newspaper's website.

- Learn to think interactively. Analyze interactive online features such as polls, games, message boards and databases in your local websites or others, such as CNN (*www.cnn.com*).
- Plan to update stories. Analyze how major news sites continually update their stories.
- Consider the role of blogs and social media comments. Analyze blogs for their news or entertainment value. Check journalists' blogs at *www.cyberjournalist.net/journalist-blogs.*
- Consider the nature of your audience.
- Become a visual thinker. Compare the visuals for a news story covered in your newspaper, on TV and online. Consider visuals for the stories you will produce.

Soft news can also be stories that focus on people, places or issues that affect readers' lives. These types of stories are called "feature stories." A story about the growing number of babies suffering from AIDS could be considered a soft-news story. It isn't less important than hard news, but it isn't news that happened overnight. However, a feature story can be based on a news event. Instead of being just a factual account of the event, it features or focuses on a particular angle, such as human-interest reactions.

If the action or event occurred the same day as or the day before publication of the newspaper, the event is called "breaking news." Here is an example of the lead of a breaking news story from a Saturday edition:

> Tornadoes rapped Topeka and southeast Shawnee County Friday afternoon, damaging seven homes and sending residents scurrying for cover.
>
> No one was injured by the short, severe storm that struck unexpectedly.
>
> — STEVE FRY, *Topeka* (Kansas) *Capital-Journal*

Linda Winkler/Courtesy of Federal Emergency Management Agency

Damage to a home in Kansas from a tornado.

The preceding example of a hard-news story tells readers what happened. The newspaper also printed this feature story focusing on people affected by the storm:

> Becky Clark of Topeka was told the tornado sirens that sounded Friday afternoon were a false alarm.
>
> Then she got home from work and saw her back yard at 2411 S.E. Gemini Ave. in the Aquarian Acres neighborhood.
>
> "I couldn't believe it," she said.
>
> A tornado had lifted up the family pontoon boat, which was parked in the back yard, and tossed it into the family swimming pool, crushing part of the boat.
>
> "It just wanted to get in the water," said Joe Clark, Becky's husband.
>
> "I guess it was tired of being in dry dock. . . . ."
>
> — JOE TASCHLER, *Topeka* (Kansas) *Capital-Journal*

The hard-news story about the storm was the main story, called a "mainbar." Because the accompanying feature story was a different angle on the same topic, it was a sidebar packaged with the main story.

But many other features in a newspaper do not have a breaking news peg. They simply focus on interesting people or topics. For example, the *Boca Raton* (Florida) *News* printed a feature story on the growing popularity of waterbeds, a topic of interest to its readers.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUALS

The presentation of a story with photographs or graphics is crucial. Broadcast media depend on visuals for the majority of stories. Studies by The Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida, show an increased emphasis on graphic devices and color in print media.

Courtesy of the Poynter Institute

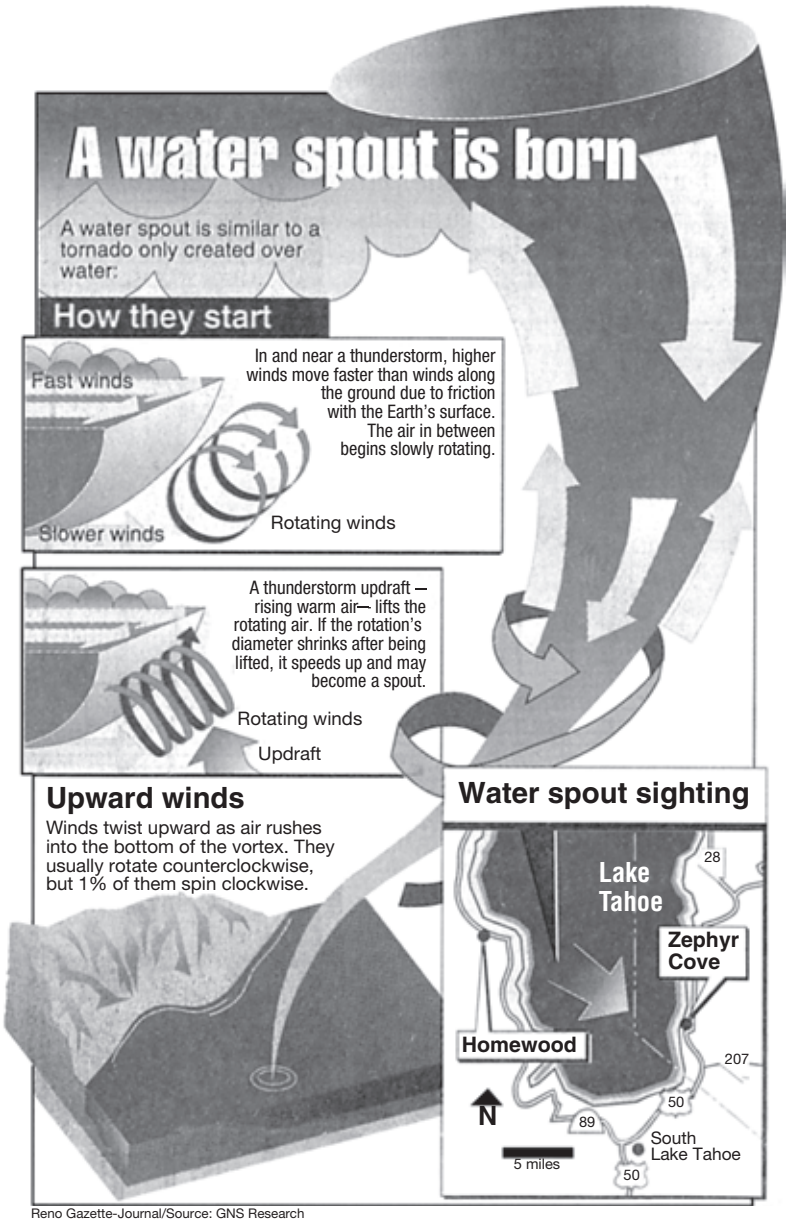
Headgear to track readers' eye movements in the Poynter Eye Track study.

In one study, called "Eyes on the News," researchers measured eyetracking, the movements of people's eyes as they read the newspaper. The results of this study, also known as the Eye Track study, showed that readers are drawn to color photographs first, then headlines, cutlines (captions), briefs (stories abbreviated to one to three paragraphs) and a number of other graphic devices called "points of entry" — points where the reader enters a story. Some of those eye-catching points include subheadlines and quotations displayed in larger type within the story.

The study also concluded that most people only scan the newspaper, looking at headlines and graphics, and that they read very few stories all the way through. The average reader skims about 25 percent

of the stories in the newspaper but thoroughly reads only half of those (about 12 percent), the study concluded.

Mario Garcia, who co-authored the Poynter study and is a world-renowned consultant on newspaper design, says the majority of readers today do not remember life without television, so visual elements are crucial in a newspaper. "The marriage of visual and words has to begin early — from the first time you learn reporting," he says. Garcia now says the iPad will have a dramatic effect on news.



Graphic explaining how a waterspout is created.

The latest Eye Track study conducted by Poynter in 2012 on how people read on tablets revealed that people "tended to enter a screen through a dominant element, generally a photograph." Faces in photographs and videos, as well as maps and explanatory graphics, particularly graphics showing weather or traffic patterns, were viewed more on tablets than charts were in print and online media.

That finding contradicts an Eye Track study in 2007 of online readers that determined that graphics were less important in online news. The study found that online readers focused first on text in news websites rather than informational graphics.

But with the influence of mobile devices, the latest study on how people read on tablets is significant for writers and news designers. Another conclusion was that when people read on tablets, they tended to keep their finger on the screen and touched the screen frequently. This multitouch environment indicates a need for some interactivity, Garcia said. "You have to make the finger happy; keep the reader engaged."

All the studies confirm that in this multimedia world, planning visual elements is a crucial part of any news or public relations presentation.

THE COACHING METHOD

This book is developed around a coaching method, which is a way of helping writers discover their problems and learn techniques to solve them.

Just as a basketball coach trains players to improve their techniques on the court, a writing coach trains writers to improve their techniques in the craft. This book aims to serve as a surrogate writing coach by anticipating the problems writers might have and offering solutions. It features tips from leading writing coaches and award-winning journalists.

The coaching method in this book has four phases:

1. **Conceive the idea:** At this stage you develop the idea for the story. If you are covering an event, such as a meeting or an accident, you need to start with the idea — the main point of what occurred. Who, what, when, where and why will this person, place or event be of interest to become a news story? That main idea will be the focus of your story. Once you begin reporting, you may discover some information that is more important than your original focus. Therefore, you should be flexible and decide the focus for writing after you collect the material.
2. **Collect:** This is the reporting stage. Before you conduct your interview, you should look for background information: Check online sources and any available documents or clips from previous stories about your subject and your sources. Then interview sources, and gather as much information as you can about your topic. Don't rely on one source; seek several points of view. Ask more questions and take more notes than you plan to use. You should also jot down your observations and gather as many details as possible.
3. **Construct:** This is the planning and writing stage. Begin with a plan for your story developed around the focus, the main idea of your story. Then go through

your notes and mark only the information related to that focus. Like a carpenter building a house, you need a blueprint. Jot down a few key words to indicate how you will organize your story. Then write a first draft of your story. You may revise your original draft in the next step.

4. **Correct:** After you have written your story, read it and make any necessary changes. You may decide to add or delete information or to completely reorganize the story during this stage. You should also check the spelling of all names and the accuracy of facts, and you should correct grammar, style and typing errors.

These four steps constitute the basic process for all news stories. In the coming chapters you will learn many techniques for reporting and writing news.

EXERCISES

1 **Visual awareness:** Try this experiment to test your reading habits. Bring to class a copy of a newspaper you haven't read. Read the newspaper as you would for pleasure. Place a check on the first item you look at — a picture, graphic, headline or story. Mark the stories you read, and place an X at the point in the story where you decide to stop reading. Where did your eye go first? Why are visual elements so important? Now analyze which stories you read and how much of them you read. Where did you stop on most stories? Why? Keep in mind that because you are a journalism student, you may read more than the average reader. If you have an iPad or tablet computer, try the same experiment, and make notes of any differences in how you read.

2 **Journal:** Keep a journal of your reading or viewing habits of news for three days. Write a paragraph each day about the kinds of stories you read and didn't read, how many you read all the way through, and how many you read just through the headline or the first few paragraphs. Note how you accessed the stories — online, via a mobile phone or tablet device or from a print publication or a TV newscast. Analyze your preferences. Then interview three other people — students, neighbors or strangers — and ask them what kinds of stories they do and don't read in print and online. Ask where they get the majority of their news — from print, broadcast, mobile or online media. Write a summary of your findings.

3 **Online news ideas:** Either in small groups or as a class, brainstorm topics and ideas that you would want to read in an online newspaper or magazine or on a digital device. Brainstorm at least three interactive features for an online college newspaper.

4 **Qualities of news:** Analyze your local or campus newspaper or website on the front page and/or local section. Identify the qualities of news of the main stories. Now do the same for a TV news broadcast. Jot down the stories in a 30-minute telecast, and identify the qualities of news in each segment.

MindTap

FEATURED ONLINE ACTIVITIES: Log on to the MindTap for Rich's Writing and Reporting News to access a variety of robust additional material, including this chapter's learning objectives, activities, comprehension quizzes, and more!

CHAPTER 2

The Basic News Story

Too many stories fail to answer the reader's most challenging question: So what?

—**ROY PETER CLARK,** *Writing Coach and Author*

COACHING TIPS

State the focus, the main idea, of your story in one sentence.

To **find your lead,** ask yourself: What is most important or most interesting?

Write the story in a **conversational tone,** as though you were telling a friend.

Consider how your story will **affect readers.**

Consider what **photographs, graphics, audio or video** your story needs for print, broadcast or online delivery.

Consider how your story could be promoted or discussed on **Twitter or other social media.**

THE BASIC NEWS STORY IS TOLD UPSIDE DOWN: THE END RESULT IS given first. It is usually called a hard-news story. That doesn't mean it should be hard to read — quite the contrary. It really should be called an easy-news story because the facts are presented in a direct form that makes it easy for the reader to get the most important information quickly.

A hard-news story presents the key facts in the first few paragraphs. If a news story were a mystery story, you would solve the mystery in the beginning and then devote the rest of the story to telling the reader how and why it happened.

For example, if state officials who regulate higher education — often called the Board of Regents — met yesterday to discuss an increase in tuition at universities in your state, you wouldn't write that the Board of Regents met to consider a tuition increase. You would give the results. What did the regents decide? Who is affected?

Here is an example:

> Tuition at the University of Alaska will increase 25 percent in the next two years, according to a budget proposal approved by the university's Board of Regents.
>
> Undergraduate fees will increase by $128 in the fall and by another $365 in the following year, raising the total tuition for in-state students to $5,580.
>
> The board's action prompted widespread protests by students who demonstrated on the Anchorage campus and voiced their anger on Facebook and blogs.

This direct approach to news is effective in all types of media: print, broadcast, online and for news releases in public relations. It is especially important when writing for small screens on mobile media, which is an increasing form of delivery for news.

Nicholas Money/*The Northern Light*

Students at the University of Alaska Anchorage protest tuition increases.

FINDING THE FOCUS

Not all basic news stories have to start with such a direct approach. Some stories start with a storytelling approach, such as an anecdote about a person or place. Regardless of how you start your story, all news stories are developed around one main point — a focus. The rest of the story should contain quotes, facts and information to support that focus. Because readers and viewers are bombarded with so much information these days, they want to know the point of the story quickly, so you need to put the focus in the first sentence or within the first few paragraphs of the story. The following questions will help you find a focus:

What's the Story About? To determine the focus of a news story, ask yourself, "What's the story about?" Try to answer that question in one simple sentence. Think of focus as a headline for your story. How would you describe the main idea in a few words? What makes this story newsworthy? How would you express the focus in a tweet of 140 characters?

How Are Readers or Viewers Affected? Why should readers or viewers care about your story? This is the "so-what" factor. Is there something important, interesting or unusual that will affect your audience? Is there something that will inspire readers to blog or tweet about your story?

How Would You Tell the Story to a Friend? Another way to determine your focus is to use the "tell-a-friend" technique. This is a natural conversational method, particularly important in broadcast writing.

Imagine that your friend asks what the story is about and what happened. Chances are that you might talk about the most interesting information first.

In this example, the focus is in the first sentence, which is the lead. It tells what the story is about and how it affects the reader. It is also written in a conversational tone. The second paragraph and the rest of the story provide facts and information to support this main idea.

Headline — Focus in the lead

Eye on privacy at work
If you have a job, you have no privacy when it comes to using the office computer.

From monitoring emails to capturing instant messages among friends, employers can do as they see fit with the information passing through a company network.

— *Chicago Tribune*

Second paragraph supporting the lead

Keith Riggs/Federal Emergency Management Agency

Computers aren't private in the workplace.

BASIC QUESTIONS

All news stories answer some basic questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how?

As newspaper readership declines and competition increases because of all-day coverage in broadcast and online media, editors increasingly want answers to these questions: So what? What is the significance to readers? How can you make readers see and care about the story?

Eugene Roberts, a former editor at *The New York Times* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, tells this story about how his editor influenced him to write vividly enough to make the reader see.

Roberts was a reporter at the *Goldsboro News-Argus* in North Carolina. His editor, Henry Belk, was blind. Many days Belk would call in Roberts to read his stories to him, and Belk would yell, "Make me see. You aren't making me see."

Advice from Roberts: "The best reporters, whatever their backgrounds or their personalities, share that consummate drive to get to the center of a story and then put the reader on the scene."

Much has changed in the media since Roberts was a reporter many years ago. But his advice is just as relevant today. Identify the center of the story, which is the focus; gather information to make the reader see; and write a compelling story to make the reader care.

ELEMENTS OF THE BASIC NEWS STORY

News stories in all media share some common elements. Every news story is based on one main idea — the focus. The basic news story structure includes a headline and three general parts: a beginning, called the "lead"; a middle, called the "body" and an ending.

Headline

The headline is the line on top of the story that identifies the main idea of the story so the reader can decide whether to access the full story. Online news sites and many newspapers today are using secondary headlines — called "deck heads," "summary lines" or "summary blurbs." The two headlines together give the reader a quick overview of the story's content.

Headline
Deck head/ summary blurb

Salmon spawn a new crisis

Dwindling numbers and fading strength threaten to add the fish to the list of endangered species.

— *Los Angeles Times*

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Salmon about to spawn.

If you are having trouble identifying the main point of a story, think of a headline for it. Broadcast news scripts don't include headlines, but the concept will help you find focus.

Lead

At the beginning of the story, the hook that tells the reader what the story is about is called the "lead." A good lead entices the reader to continue reading. In a hard-news

story, the lead usually is written in one sentence — the first sentence of the story — and gives the most important information about the event. But even a basic story can have a creative lead, called a "soft lead" or "feature lead."

Summary Leads The most common type of lead on a hard-news story is called a "summary lead" because it summarizes the main points about what happened. It answers the questions of who, what, when, where, why and how. The rest of the story elaborates about what, why and how.

Hard-News Leads These leads do not have to answer all those questions in the first sentence if doing so would make the lead too long and difficult to read.

Shorter leads of fewer than 35 words are preferable, but that number is only a guideline. With the increasing delivery of news for mobile media, brief writing is better for readers accessing information on their smartphones.

The writer has to decide which elements are most important to stress in the first sentence. The summary lead in the following example stresses who, what, where and when; the rest of the story gives more details, such as the names of the professor and the suspect:

A Northwestern University professor of hearing sciences was shot and seriously wounded in a university parking lot Thursday.

Feature Leads A lead that starts with a story or description about a person, place or incident, is called a "feature lead" or an "anecdotal lead." Many feature leads begin with a description of a person who is a key source in the story, and the focus of the story is explained in another paragraph.

Lead

When he was a little girl, Leo said he hated wearing dresses. Today the Ball State University graduate student is sitting in his office, clad in khakis and a button shirt.

At first encounter, Leo, who asked for his last name not to be used, looks like a typical thirty-something guy; sideburns, goatee, a little pudgy but nothing out of the ordinary. In a raspy tenor voice, he talks about the store he and his wife own, about their cats and about how he quit smoking three months ago and can't live without nicotine gum.

But Leo's demure appearance betrays his extraordinary past. In 1999 he began the process of physically transitioning from a woman named Lynette into a man named Leo.

Focus

— ADRIAN SHARP, *Ball State* (Indiana) *Daily News*

Nut Graph

The nut graph is a sentence or paragraph that states the focus — the main point — of the story. It should tell in a nutshell what the story is about and why it is newsworthy. The term was coined more than 50 years ago by *The Wall Street Journal* in a memo to its staff. The memo said a story must have one central theme that must be expressed in a "nutshell summary" high in the story. The concept of the nut graph has since become a standard formula for all news stories.

In a hard-news story with a direct summary lead, the lead contains the focus, so you don't need a separate nut graph. But the nut graph is crucial when a story starts with a feature lead because the reader has to wait for a few paragraphs to find out the reason for the story.

The nut graph should be placed high in the story, generally by the third to fifth paragraph. But if the lead is very compelling, the nut graph could come later. Rigid rules can ruin good writing.

Anecdotal lead

SANTA CRUZ — Until Hollywood calls, film major Wesley Adkins said he's OK with being a struggling artist. But by the time he graduates, the junior may wish he was a business major. Already his student loans total $25,000.

Nut graph

The cost of attending UC Santa Cruz, or for that matter most any university, has skyrocketed over the past three years. . . . More and more students are leaving school with huge financial burdens.

— *Santa Cruz* (California) *Sentinel*

Quotes or Sound Bites

After the lead, the body of the story should support the focus with information from sources, quotes or facts that explain the main idea. If you have a good quote or sound bite from a source, it should be placed high in the story after the lead or nut graph. The first quote that backs up the lead is called the "lead quote" or the "augmenting quote." It is usually the strongest quote you have, and it supports the concept in the lead without repeating the same information or wording. In broadcast news a good sound bite following the lead is equivalent to the lead quote.

A lead quote isn't required in all stories, but a strong quote or sound bite helps make the story more interesting. If the lead does not contain all the information about who, what, when, where, why and how, these questions should be answered in the body of the story. In this example, the lead quote is in the third paragraph, and the nut graph is in the fifth paragraph.

When he discusses drinking, tragedy and lawsuits with people nationwide, Dave Westol gets rapt attention by flashing a picture of grim young men in dark suits and ties — their hands folded. Their heads bowed.The picture shows the funeral of 19-year-old University of Kansas freshman Jason Wren, who was pronounced dead from alcohol poisoning on March 8, 2009, in his fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon.

Lead quote

"I throw that slide up, and the audience inevitably becomes silent," said Westol, an official for the Fraternal Information and Programming Group, a non-profit that educates Greeks nationwide on risky behaviors and legal liabilities.

Before Jason Wren died, he was best known for his big heart and fun-loving nature. He was outgoing. He was athletic. He played for the KU lacrosse club.

Nut graph

But since his death, Wren is better known for how and where he died. His name has taken on a national and local role as an attention-grabber for experts like Westol and a wake-up call for universities. He is just one student among grim statistics that show significant alcohol abuse among college students — especially those at the University of Kansas — and even more abuse among fraternity members nationwide.

— GARTH SEARS, *University Daily Kansan*

Impact

Whenever possible, the writer should explain how the news affects readers. The "impact" sentence or paragraph should answer these questions: What is the significance of this story? What in the story makes the reader care? Sometimes the impact is explained in the lead or in the nut graph; sometimes it is lower in the story, in an explanatory paragraph.

Not all stories can show direct impact on readers, but they should all have a clear paragraph explaining the reason for the story. In some stories, such as police stories, the impact is that the news happened in the community and should be of interest to local residents.

Home users are now the top target for Internet attackers, who are launching increasingly sophisticated attacks.

That's the sobering warning from Symantec's latest Internet security threat report, released today.

— *The Vancouver Sun*

Online news sites provide impact in several interactive ways: Databases let readers search statistics about education, crime or property values in their communities; interactive calculators give readers a chance to figure what a tax increase might cost them; feedback questions, polls and blogs ask readers to comment on issues. Social media sites encourage readers and viewers to interact with the news.

Attribution

Where did you get the information? Who told you these facts? How can the reader be sure what you say is true? Attribution, which identifies the source of the information, can provide those answers. With the proliferation of social media (blogs, Twitter and other sites), it is even more difficult to determine the validity of information. Attribution adds credibility for the story.

You need to attribute all quotes — exact wording of statements that people made — and much information that you did not witness. If the information is common knowledge or indisputable, you do not have to attribute it. However, you need to attribute any statements that express opinions.

Amanda Mills/Centers for Disease Control

A driver distracted by her cellphone.

No attribution needed — common knowledge

Millions of people in the U.S. and other countries use cell phones.

Drivers using cell phones are four times more likely to cause a crash than other drivers, according to a Harvard University study.

Attribution needed — not common knowledge

The attribution should be in the lead for controversial or accusatory information, but in many other cases it can be delayed so it doesn't clutter the lead. Police stories often have attribution in the lead, especially if you get the information by telephone or if the information is accusatory:

Lead with attribution

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — A 15-year-old boy was stabbed twice in the chest Thursday afternoon when he apparently tried to break up a fight in a crowded parking lot at Northeast High School, authorities said.

Backup

Police and school officials said the stabbing, believed to have occurred after one student took another's hat, was the first they could recall at Pinellas County schools.

— *Tampa Bay Times/St. Petersburg* (Florida) *Times*

In the next example, general attribution is in the lead, but the specific attribution is in the third paragraph. The sources for the study are too cumbersome to use in the lead.

Lead with general attribution

A smoky bar may be more harmful to your health than a city street filled with diesel truck fumes, according to a new study.

Smoky bars and casinos have up to 50 times more cancer-causing particles than air in highways and city streets clogged with diesel trucks, the study says.

Backup with specific attribution

Indoor air pollution virtually disappears when smoking is banned, according to the study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* and partially funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation of New Jersey, a philanthropic organization devoted to health care.

Context/Background

Is there any history or background the reader needs in order to understand how a problem or action occurred? Put the story in perspective, or context. If the story is about a fire, accident or crime, how many other incidents of this type have occurred in the community recently? Most stories need some background to explain the action, as in this example:

Lead

Lock your doors. That's the advice of University of Iowa security chief Dan Hogan in light of recent reports of a prowler slipping into unlocked dormitory rooms at night.

Lead quote

"I can't stress that enough," he said. "It's a very serious situation."

Background

Since Aug. 24, there have been six reports of a man entering women's rooms between 3 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. Five incidents were in Burge Hall and one was in Currier Hall.

Two times the man touched the sleeping women, Hogan said. But there was no force or violence. In each instance the man ran when the woman discovered him.

More recently, a woman in Burge Hall heard someone at her door. She opened it and saw a man running down the hall, Hogan said.

— VALOREE ARMSTRONG, *Iowa City Press-Citizen*

Elaboration

Supporting points related to the main issue constitute "elaboration." These can be statements, quotes or more detail to explain what happened, how and why the problem or action occurred, and reactions to the event.

In this part of the story, seek other points of view to make sure you have balance and fairness. A story based on one source can be too biased. The preceding story about the University of Iowa continued with more explanation:

> George Droll, director of residence services, said main doors to the halls were locked from midnight to 6 a.m. But each resident has a key. Some floors have 24-hour visitation.
>
> Often students feel more secure than they should because the buildings are large and are home to many of their friends, he said.

Ending

The most common type of ending includes one of these elements: future action, a statement or quote that summarizes but does not repeat the previous information or more elaboration. If the future action is a key factor in the issue, it should be placed higher in the story. Avoid summary endings that repeat what you have already said. In a basic news story, end when you have no more new information to reveal.

The ending on the Iowa story follows the residence director's comments about why students feel secure in large buildings where they have friends:

Summary quote ending	"That's a strength, but it can also be a weakness in terms of people securing their rooms," Droll said.

Fairness and Accuracy

If the story involves conflict, you should always get comments from both or all sides of an issue. Avoid one-source stories. Also, make sure you attribute your sources, including information you use from websites, other news organizations and quotes or statements from people you interview.

Visuals

Visual elements such as photographs, charts and other graphic illustrations are crucial to news presentation in print and online information. Video is also a major asset for digital media. Visuals also enhance news releases or media kits in public relations. Here are some other visual elements used to enhance news stories:

MULTIMEDIA COACH

FOCUS IS CRUCIAL in print, broadcast and online news. If the focus of the story is unclear to broadcast viewers, they will turn to another channel. If the focus in an online story is not clear in the headline or summary blurb, readers may not even click into your online story. Ask yourself these questions:

- What is the most important idea that will entice viewers to listen to your story or online readers to click into your story?
- Before you write your story for any medium, write a focus sentence in fewer than 35 words. This also can be the lead of your story for an online site or a broadcast story. Now convert the focus into a headline of no more than six words for an online site. Here's an example:

Headline: Campus booze arrests jump 24 percent

Summary blurb under the headline: Sex, drug, weapons violations also increase.

- Online stories often have comment boxes or polls seeking readers' feedback. If you were seeking feedback on the main idea of your story, what question would you ask? The question may give you a clue for finding your focus.
- Have you answered the questions of who, what, where, when, how and why, and explained the impact on the reader or viewer?
- If your story is about a conflict, have you contacted sources on both sides of the issue?

Summary Blurb

A paragraph or sentence summarizing the story is called a "summary blurb." It is placed below the headline.

In online news the summary and lead of the story may be the same because the blurb may be on an index page linking to stories inside the site. But in print stories when the blurb is published directly over the story, the lead does not have to repeat the summary. It can be more creative, as in this example:

Headline
Summary blurb

Papers a lesson in criminology
A USF professor follows a paper trail to a former student wanted on charges he sold term papers to criminology majors.

A. Engler Anderson's term papers weren't just bad. They were a crime, said one professor.

Anderson, 31, is wanted on charges that he sold term papers to two University of South Florida students.

Their major?

Criminology.

The charge — selling a term paper or dissertation to another person — is only a second-degree misdemeanor,

but if he is caught, Anderson will be held without bail because he failed to appear for a court hearing this week.

— *Tampa Bay Times/ St. Petersburg* (Florida) *Times*

The story then explains how William Blount, chairman of the USF Criminology Department, received two papers that he thought were "awful" and then discovered they were written by Anderson, a former student.

Pull Quote

A good pull quote might be broken out of the story, placed in larger type and used as a point of entry to entice the reader. Although an editor may decide which quotes to pull for graphic display, when you write your story, consider which quotes could be used to entice readers. Then use your best quotes high in your story. In a story explaining sexual harassment, this "pull quote" from an employment lawyer was used for emphasis:

I think what the law says is that if you hit on me, and I say, "No way, Buster," I'm entitled to have you accept my rejection of you, and it shouldn't interfere with my work.

— JUDITH VLADECK, *Employment Lawyer*

Facts or Highlights Box

Information from a story is sometimes set off in a "facts box," also called a "highlights box," for reading at a glance or providing key points in the story. A facts or highlights box can include the dates in a chronology or the main points of a proposal or meeting. It is especially useful for breaking statistics out of a story. Although some information from a facts box may be crucial to include in the story, the writer should guard against too much repetition. Facts boxes are effective in newspaper and online stories as well as in magazine and public relations articles.

CNN uses highlights in a list at the top or on the side of major news stories on its website. The highlights are usually four to five bulleted facts from the story to give readers a quick summary of the main points as in this story about online dating:

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Some dating experts say online dating has sapped our social skills
- Approaching people and starting conversations can be hard if you're not used to it

- Users mistake social media for being social, says body language expert Blake Eastman
- Practice talking to others by striking up a conversation in the coffee line

— *CNN*

Here is an example of a facts box that accompanied a story from *The Kansas City Star* about the dangers of lightning. These statistics were not repeated in the story:

LIGHTNING DEATHS AND INJURIES

Figures below were compiled from 35 years of U.S. lightning statistics.

Location of incident

- Open fields, recreation areas: 27%
- Under trees (not golf): 14%
- Water-related (boating, fishing, swimming, etc.): 8%
- Golf/golf under trees: 5%

Month of most incidents

- July 30%

Deaths by state, top five

- Florida, Michigan, Texas, New York, Tennessee

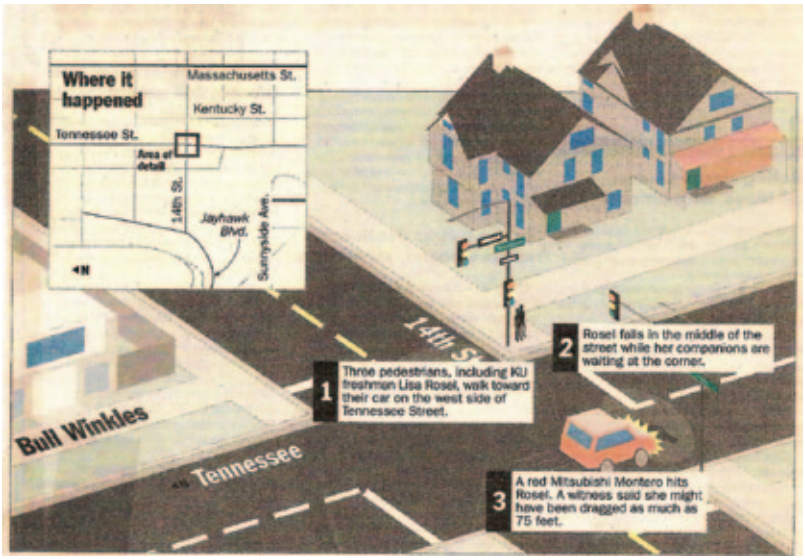
Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Infographic

A chart, map, graph or other illustration meant to provide information is an "infographic." Examples of infographics are diagrams of plane crashes or major accidents and illustrations explaining how something works. The most common type of infographic, called a "location map," pinpoints the location of an accident, a crime or any other major news event.

It is the reporter's responsibility to supply the information for those maps. So when you report a story that may need a map, make sure you gather information about the exact location of the event by noting the streets, the number of feet or yards from a spot where an explosion or major crime occurred, or any other crucial information that would help readers visualize the location. Stories for online delivery might use Google maps or other programs to illustrate the location.

Many of the visual elements — such as headlines, boxes of information and summary sentences — are written by editors. However, reporters are expected to plan photos for their stories and to provide information for some of the graphics. When a chart, a graphic or a facts box will accompany your story, consider whether the story needlessly duplicates information that could be presented visually. So in the writing process, don't just think about information to put into your story; think also about information to pull out for visual devices.



Reprinted with permission from *The University Daily Kansan*

Infographic by Andrew Rohrback, *The University Daily Kansan.*

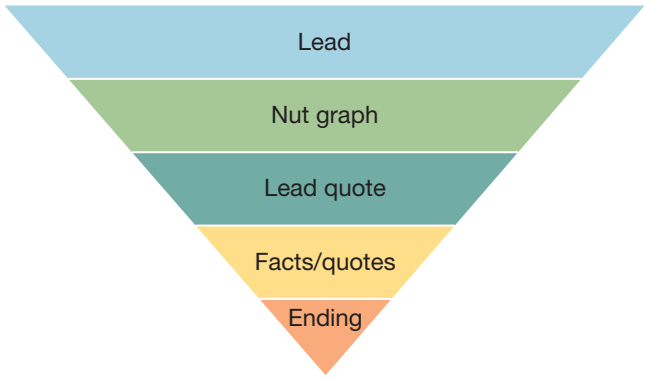
Audio and Video for Online Delivery

Audio and video are crucial for television news stories, but if you are writing the story for a print publication, you still should think about sound and sight. Most news organizations have websites these days, so you should plan to record the interviews for posting on the organization's website. Also more news organizations — print and broadcast — are delivering information for mobile media in text and video forms.

SOCIAL MEDIA

YOU CAN USE social media concepts before and after you write your story.

- Use Twitter as a way to focus your story or conceive your lead by composing a tweet in 140 characters.
- Post a tweet to notify readers about the news or updates to your story.
- Consider how your story will affect readers; what tweets, blogs or posts will your story generate?
- Are there links that you should include in your tweets?
- Is there a blog that you could write about your story?
- Are there photos you might post on Instagram?



Inverted Pyramid.

EXAMPLE OF BASIC NEWS STORY

The following example will show you how elements of the basic news story fit together for print or online delivery. This is a standard news story with a summary lead. The story is organized in "inverted pyramid" form, giving the most important information first and the rest in descending order of importance.

This story contains most of the basic news elements described in this chapter.

Four families left homeless by Tacoma apartment blaze

Summary lead (who, what, where)

Four families were left homeless after fire raced through an apartment complex in this Tacoma suburb, officials said.

Backup

No one was injured, but a pet cat died in the two-alarm blaze, firefighters said Monday. About 12 people had to be relocated.

Background/ elaboration

The fire started yesterday in an upper corner unit at the Meadow Park Garden Court and spread to a two-bedroom apartment through a common attic, University Place Assistant Fire Chief Lynn Wilbur said.

The blaze destroyed two units and damaged two others.

Reaction

Rosemary Hurlburt, whose apartment was gutted, said she and her two daughters were at a convenience store when the fire started. The family lost a lot of new possessions, she said.

"We just got new stuff. My 5-year-old daughter just had a birthday party. We just got her a brand-new bunk bed set," Hurlburt said.

Investigators had not confirmed the cause of the fire, but Wilbur said the blaze may have been started by a stove that was left on in one unit.

"The pots were melted down on it," he said.

Ending: future action

Apartment manager Steve Edwards said he couldn't relocate the families in the apartment complex because it was filled to capacity. Some of the residents may have to seek shelter through the American Red Cross, he said.

— *The Oregonian*

ETHICS

ETHICAL DILEMMA: What do you do if a source tells you not to quote him at the end of an interview or after the interview but before you go to press or on the air?

Ethical values: Decency, fairness, accuracy, responsibility to readers and sources, credibility.

Ethical guidelines: The decision is more difficult when sources want to withdraw their quotes after you conduct an interview. Try to avoid this situation by making it clear at the start of your interview that you want your source to go "on the record." If you still encounter a source who wants to retract a quote, you can negotiate with the source, or you can insist that you have a right to use the information because you identified your purpose clearly. But that may not help you.

Here are some questions to consider when asked to withdraw a quote:

- Are you being fair to your source?
- Are you being fair to your readers?
- Are the quotes essential to your story?

These are tough decisions. You can read more about what constitutes "on the record" and "off the record" or "not for attribution" in the chapter on Interviewing Techniques.

QUOTES AND ATTRIBUTION

> Readers come to the newspaper the way they come to a party. They want to talk to interesting people. Long quotes usually are not very interesting.
>
> —SUSAN AGER, *Writing Coach*

Good quotes can back up your lead and substantiate information in your story. In addition, good quotes let the reader hear the speaker. But boring quotes can bog down stories. If they repeat what you have already said, it's better to paraphrase or eliminate them. In a broadcast story, sound bites take the place of quotes.

Susan Ager, a former columnist and writing coach for the *Detroit Free Press*, said reporters should consider quotes as the spice of the story, not the meat and potatoes.

Plagiarism

Copying the words of other writers is plagiarism, a cardinal sin in journalism. Even if you paraphrase information you receive from other publications, you are plagiarizing

if you don't attribute it. Plagiarism is grounds for dismissal at most news organizations. If you take information from written or online resources, make sure you attribute it.

Plagiarism applies to blogs, tweets and other online sites as well. If you copy information from a source without needed attribution on your blog, you are still guilty of stealing information.

When to Use Direct Quotes

Here are some guidelines for deciding when to use direct quotes:

- Is the quote interesting and informative?
- Can the quote back up the lead, the nut graph or a supporting point in your story?
- Is the quote memorable without referring to your notes? If so, it's probably a good quote.
- Do your quotes repeat your transitions? In broadcast news avoid introducing a sound bite with a transition that repeats what the source will say. That is called "parroting," a technique that should be avoided.
- Can you state the information better in your own words? If so, paraphrase.
- Does the quote or sound bite advance the story by adding emotion, interest or new information?
- Are you including the quote or sound bite for your source or for your readers or viewers? That is the most important question of all. The readers' and viewers' interests always take priority.

Here are some types of quotes or sound bites to avoid:

- Avoid direct quotes when the source is boring or the information is factual and indisputable. For example, a city official who says, "We are going to have our regular monthly meeting Tuesday night" is not worth quoting directly.
- Avoid any direct quote or sound bite that isn't clearly worded. If a government official says something in bureaucratic language that you don't fully understand, ask for clarification and then paraphrase.
- Avoid accusatory quotes from politicians or witnesses of a crime. If you intend to include any accusations, get a response from the person accused. A direct quote or sound bite does not save you from libel. If police or other criminal justice officials make accusations in an official capacity, you may use direct or indirect quotes provided that you attribute them carefully.
- Avoid quotes that don't relate directly to the focus and supporting points in your story.

How to Write Quotes

On the surface, writing quotes may seem easy: You just write down what somebody else has said. The format for writing sound bites in a broadcast script differs from print

style and will be explained in the broadcast chapter. For print and online delivery, observe the following guidelines if you want to use quotes correctly and effectively:

- Always put commas and periods inside the quotation marks:

"There are no exceptions to that rule," the professor said.

- A question mark and other punctuation marks go within the quotation marks if the punctuation refers to the quoted material; otherwise, they go outside the quotation marks:

He asked, "When does the semester end?"
Who said, "I hope it ends soon"?

- Each new speaker must be quoted in a separate paragraph:

"Never place quotes from two speakers in the same paragraph," Professor Les Polk said.
"Even if it's short?" Janet Rojas asked.
"Yes," Polk answered.

- Don't attribute a single quote more than once. If you have two quoted sentences from the same speaker in the same paragraph, you need only one attribution:

"You must study your Associated Press Stylebook," the professor said. "You will have a test Tuesday on material in the first 30 pages."

- "When the quote is two or more sentences in the same paragraph, attribute it after the first sentence," Carol English said. "Don't make the reader wait until the end of the paragraph to discover who is speaking."
- Attribution in the middle of a quote is acceptable, but not preferable if it interrupts the thought:

"It isn't the best way," he said, "to use a direct quote. But it is all right if the quote is very long. However, it's better to put it at the end of a complete sentence."